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ABSTRACT

This learning unit on supervising in the system is one in the Choice Series, a self-learning development program for supervisors. Purpose stated for the approximately eight-hour-long unit is to enable the supervisor to understand organizations as systems, understand how authority and responsibility work in the workplace, distinguish between types of work relationships, and clarify the position of the supervisor in the system. An introduction provides an overview of the unit and lists unit objectives. Parts A through D contain informative material, activities and answer keys, self-checks and answer keys, and a summary. Topics include what a system is, the supervisor's position, results for others, and results through others. Part E contains performance checks--an end check to be completed alone and a tutor check and work-based project. Part F consists of a brief unit review, extensions (print sources of additional information, such as units or sections in books), and a list of references. (YLB)

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An Open Tech Project

SUPERVISING

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF SUPERVISION

17: Supervising in the System

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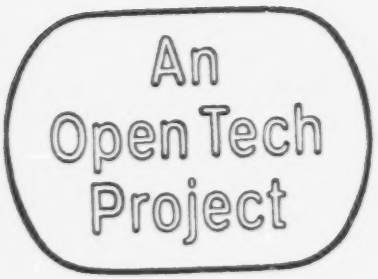
17: SUPERVISING IN THE SYSTEM

Colin Wimpory



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Colin Wimpory
Supervising in the System (Number 17 in the CHOICE SERIES of learning units)

Series Editor: Harry V Pardue
Northern Regional Management Centre.

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WORKING GUIDE TO THIS UNIT IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

This Unit is now your personal property - it's not for handing back to your training officer or to a tutor. It is your working book.

The Contents will increase in value to you each time you write on one of its pages. This is a working text for your personal notes - without notes its value is limited.

Qualifications forget about certificates and diplomas - you don't need them for this programme. What you do need is the wish:-

* to do your job better
* for personal development

Your study time is really up to you - we guess you will need about 8 hours in total. But it's your time - spend as long as you like.

How am I doing? you can judge for yourself by checking out how well you cope with the tasks we call Activities and Self Checks which occur throughout the unit. You can also get the Tutor Check and/or the Work Based Project to your tutor for an unbiased view of your progress.

Work Pace it's really up to you and depends on your interest. However, if you do well on the Activities and Self Checks, you could afford to speed up a little. Of course, if you don't do as well as you expect then you could slow down a little or flick back into the unit for a quick review of the more difficult ideas.

When in doubt - ask or seek help from:

* your family and friends
* colleagues at work
* your company training staff
* other open learners
* your tutor, by phone, by a visit to your support centre or by dropping your tutor a line through the post.

Don't worry if what you learn doesn't seem to be of use to you now, remember that times change - it may be useful one day. Anyway, just knowing more improves personal confidence.

So now make a start:-

17: SUPERVISING IN THE SYSTEM by Colin Wimpory

ABOUT THIS UNIT

"Where do I stand?" How many times have you said that?

"I'm called a supervisor but I don't really know what my position is." "The workforce treat me as if I'm part of management, and management treat me like one more operative. Where do I stand?"

You're bound to have thought about this question. Working through this unit you'll be better able to answer it.

IN THIS UNIT WE'LL

* discuss the ideas of organisations as systems
* take a look at responsibility and authority
* distinguish between the types of work relationships
* clarify the position of the supervisor in the system.

AUDIO TAPE Side 1

Before you continue through the unit, you should now listen to Side 1 of the audio tape that accompanies this unit. You will find it useful if you refer to the unit objectives shown below whilst you listen to the tape. You may wish to make the objectives clearer to yourself by making a note or two on this page as you listen.

OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this unit you will BE BETTER ABLE to

* understand your organisation as a system
* understand how authority and responsibility work at your workplace
* identify the types of work relationships you can be involved in
* appreciate your position in the system.

PART A WHAT A SYSTEM IS

1 Introduction

You've probably noticed that more and more people are using the word "system" to describe quite a number of things.

Let's think for a minute or two about what we mean by a 'system'.

ACTIVITY 1
Time guide
4 mins

First of all, list some different "systems" you can think of. I have suggested two to get you started.

* An alarm system
* The nervous system
* _____
* _____

Your answer might have included things like a ventilation system, railway system, a production control system, a water supply system, a sewage disposal system and many others.

Some are clear-cut, like a heat exchange system, a fairly straightforward piece of equipment.

Some systems, however, are much vaguer than a clear-cut thing like a heat exchange system; how often have you heard people say "You can't beat the system" when they mean people, conditions, arrangements, circumstances or anything which doesn't seem to be going their way?

2 What the word suggests

Now, let's look at the meaning of the word "system."

ACTIVITY 2
Time guide
5 mins

What does the word "system" suggest to you? Think about what the examples you put forward in Activity 1 have in common and write a few words which you think describe a system.

* _____
* _____
* _____

Compare what you've written with this definition in the Oxford Paperback Dictionary:-

"A set of connected things or parts that form a whole or work together; .... a set of rules or practices forming a particular philosophy, form of government, etc."

ACTIVITY 3
Time guide
4 mins

Underline what you think are the two key words in the Oxford Paperback Dictionary definition.

Probably the words worth remembering are "connected" and "parts".

Another dictionary (Webster's) defines the word "system" like this:-

"a regularly interacting or interdependent group ... forming a unified whole; an organisation forming a network; a form of social, economic, or political organisation or practice."

ACTIVITY 4
Time guide
4 mins

From the Webster's Dictionary definition of a system choose three or four key words and write them down here:-

* _____
* _____
* _____

I think that some of the key words here are "interacting", "interdependent", "whole", and "organisation".

There are other definitions which you may want to follow up. They all suggest that a system is always concerned with activity - with things happening - in such a way that the various parts link up and interconnect to form a whole.

They also contain the idea that, if any of the parts is taken away then the system as a whole will change and that the system is there for some purpose - it isn't something which just happens for no particular reason.

There are now whole books on systems such as Peter Checkland's "Systems Thinking, Systems Practice." It's interesting that the author uses the word "thinking" not "theory". It's not a question of fitting in with a hidebound structure but a way of thinking, of realising how everybody's job connects with and depends upon other people's and setting things up in such a way that that interaction can take place most effectively.

"Systems thinking" can help us to see more clearly the crucial position of the supervisor in an organisation - the crucial part you play supervising.

3 Types of System

Any type of system is made up of a number of parts some of which aren't much use on their own. For example, a fan, a motor, ducting, power supply cables, control switches and so on can't really serve any purpose on their own. They need to be inter-connnected to make up some sort of complete working system. Connected together the parts can, for example, form a ventilation system, if they are assembled to some kind of design.

3.1 Designed Systems

Think about your list of different systems.

Not all of them will just have "happened." Like the ventilation system, some systems have been designed deliberately by connecting together a number of parts to form a whole which is greater than the sum of the parts.

We can readily accept the use of the word "system" in cases like this and we can group them together as "DESIGNED SYSTEMS."

3.2 Natural Systems

A frog is also a system! It may sound rather odd but it is, after all, a collection of parts which work together to form a whole.

Various parts of the frog (such as the heart, itself a system of chambers and valves) can be called a sub-system of the whole frog; and the frog is in turn a part of a wider system, the animal kingdom and the bioshpere. They are all "NATURAL SYSTEMS"

3.3 Human activity systems

In the same way, your section can be part of a department or function which is in turn part of an organisation (which may belong to a wider group of organisations). Where the work and activities of people become coordinated we have "HUMAN ACTIVITY SYSTEMS."

Some sections are central to the work of the organisation. For example, lending is an activity which is central to the work and, indeed, the survival of a bank. Without income in the form of interest on overdrafts and loans, there would be very little money coming in to pay the employees their salaries or interest to depositors, unless bank charges were increased massively. So, lending is often described as the heart of banking. But it can't happen if there's no "blood" to pump around. So, savings accounts section, cheque clearing, the cashiers and so on are all necessary parts of the whole. Each sub-system has a part to play in the overall activity.

Whatever type of system we're thinking about, we will probably have to look at it in the context in which it operates to decide whether it is a success or not. For example, let's look at an airline as a system.

ACTIVITY 5
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down four features of an airliner which you would take into account if you were deciding whether it was a successful system.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

You could probably have mentioned thousands of possibilities and the more you know about aircraft, probably the more would spring to mind.

However, at a very simple level, we might think of:

speed
safety record
number of passengers it can carry
passenger comfort
technical reliability
noise level
fuel consumption

From these examples we can see that to think of an aircraft in isolation as a system doesn't take us very far. We have to think of it in relation to its performance in all sorts of areas and conditions.

Moreover, a super efficient airliner alone is no use. It's part of an air-transport system and has to be seen in relation to the ground services, for instance, which will service it. No passengers will be very impressed with flying the Atlantic at supersonic speed if it takes them another four hours to get from Heathrow to London or they have to carry their baggage along miles of draughty corridors.

So systems of any kind do not stop at the doors of the office or the outer casing of the machine: they extend to the whole environment in which they function and relate to wider and wider systems.

ACTIVITY 6
Time guide
5 mins

Think of your own workplace. List two or three sections or departments which only have a purpose because they're part of a wider system. I'll suggest two to begin with:

* Accounts Department
* Purchasing Department
* _____
* _____
* _____

You probably found, when you came to think about it, that every section or department's purpose depends upon being part of a whole system and each of them depended upon another in some way - production, marketing, credit control, despatch, for instance.

4 Common Features of Systems

Natural systems and human activity systems have two features in common:

* they must adapt to survive
* they depend upon processing information

These two features are very closely connected with each other. Let me explain what I mean.

We've just looked at the example of an airliner and seen that, to assess it as a system, we must see it in context with all sorts of considerations - with the outside world if you like. To be a success, it must relate satisfactorily to all sorts of factors outside itself. The same is true of the animal kingdom (animals have had to evolve over the centuries to survive changing climates, habitats and so on) and it is true of business organisations.

ACTIVITY 7
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down one factor which has affected how your workplace has had to adapt in the time you've been working there.

*

Obviously, I can only give a very general answer to that. Yours may be much more precise. But the chances are that the system in which you work has had to adapt to new technology, to changes in the economic climate (economic recession latterly) and perhaps, if we look a long way back, you may even have thought of the effect of the war.

Unless any system is prepared to adapt and can adapt fast, then it is almost certainly doomed to extinction - like the dinosaurs.

Adaption doesn't always make for very comfortable living and, for a supervisor, seeing your workteam through periods of change can be very challenging to put it mildly but adaption to changing circumstances is often and increasingly necessary to survival. You might find it useful to take up this extension if you are particularly concerned with a period of change in your workplace.

EXTENSION 2
page 58

How, then, do systems adapt to change?

This is where our second feature which systems have in common comes in.

All systems receive, process and give out information.

If you work in a manufacturing company, it's probably quite easy to see that your job and everybody else's contributes directly or indirectly to taking in raw materials, processing them and producing finished goods for the waiting market.

Whatever job we're in, we also do the same thing with information. The system takes in information (perhaps an enquiry or a sales order), processes that information, perhaps in several different ways, and produces different information as a result which is supplied to a wider system.

And it's by a continual awareness of the wider system from which we take our information and to which we supply information that we know how to adapt.

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

There was a recent fashion for women to wear jackets, cut like men's jackets, in dark colours and, if possible, luxurious material.

Men's outfitters suddenly found that they were doing a roaring trade in men's dinner jackets, but only in small sizes and they weren't selling the trousers to go with them.

This information needed to be responded to quickly and production stepped up to meet the new and unlikely demand.

What's more, that information itself was food for thought. If young women were starting to turn to men's outfitters, how could that business be maintained and encouraged? What else would they be likely to buy?

Men's outfitters began to think in terms of including ladies' boutiques in their shops and making traditional classic raincoats, waistcoats and tweed jackets in ladies' fittings - a response to information received from the wider system and an adaption to provide information (and a product) that could interest that wider system.

5 Comparison of systems

With a designed system it is generally easy to see where one part finishes and the next part begins. This is less true with natural systems and with human activity systems. For example, it's hard to draw a line exactly where the heart ends and the artery begins. In the same way I'm sure you'd sometimes like a clear line or boundary where your responsibility ends and someone else's responsibility begins but there will probably be occasions where there is some overlapping, whether intentional or otherwise.

Although human activity systems have an element of formal design they are continually evolving and changing over time to meet changing demands. So, although they don't just hapen entirely by chance, they may be informal and unplanned in certain ways. Most organisations seem to have a "grapevine" for example; and within the system as a whole there can be some competing or conflicting aims.

ACTIVITY 8
Time guide
4 mins

Think of your own workplace again. List a few examples where the boundaries between sub-systems i.e. section or departments overlap and sometimes get into conflict. Here's one likely pair as an example.

* Production and Sales
* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

You might have included: Personnel - Marketing
Stores - Production
Production - quality control

but, of course, the pairs which are likely to conflict very much depend upon your own experience at work.

Some of the classic conflicts seem to occur again and again where certain aims of the organisation conflict with each other regardless of who is involved. These conflicts shouldn't always be blamed on the personalities involved.

ACTIVITY 9
Time guide
4 mins

Jot down one regular source of conflict which you find between one department and another at work. The details don't matter - it's just the broad area of conflict that we're interested in. I'll suggest one to get you started.

* Maintaining quality
* _____
* _____

Your answer might well include:

* keeping costs down
* staying within the budget
* getting the job done on time
* finishing ahead of schedule

In other words, you're expected to meet output targets and deadlines.

These aims often boil down to three things:-

* quantity
* quality and
* cost

They're often called:-

* output control

* quality assurance and quality control and

* budgetary or cost control

And do they conflict? Often!

You're almost bound to have the occasional clash between certain sections (however much you like each other and get on well in other respects) - between sales and credit control, for example.

SELF CHECK 1
Time guide
10 mins

a The three types of system we've identified are

_____

_____

_____

b A system can be made up of a number of _____-_____ and in turn be part of a _____ _____.

c One word we can use for the line between one system and another is the _____.

d In organisations there may be _____ and _____ between different sub-systems.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words so you'll need to check out your answers carefully.a) The types of system we outlined were designed systems, natural systems, and human activity systems. b) A system can be made up of a number of sub-systems, and in turn be part of wider systems, in the same way as your section or department is a sub-system of the firm which might be part of a wider system called a group which is in turn part of the economy and society as a whole. c) Boundaries are the lines between our system and another (or between one sub-system and another). d) You're likely to find some overlapping and conflict between different sub-systems.

6 Summary

* A system is a set of parts which form a whole.

* There are three types of system:-

  Designed systems

  Natural systems

  Human activity systems

* Systems must adapt to survive.

* Systems take in, process and transmit information.

* Organisations are made up of sub-systems and form part of wider systems.

* Each sub-system has its own boundaries and may overlap other sub-systems occasionally resulting in uncertainty and conflict.

* In some cases the limits of your responsibility will be clear and sometimes things will be less clear cut.

PART B YOUR POSITION

1 Introduction

In this part of the unit we're going to look at sub-systems, boundaries and overlap in greater depth, dealing in turn with some of their good and bad points in order to see how this can help you cope with the position you occupy as a supervisor.

2 Sub-systems

A ventilation system works because the power cables are good conductors, the cable covering is non-conductive, the motor is specially designed to turn electricity into a circular action, and the ducts are good at ducting!

A frog "works" because part of its system is specially designed for digesting food; it has a good heart for pumping oxygen to the limbs quickly and well-developed legs to spring from one lily-pad to another. The tasks are different and are achieved by different parts of the body.

A human activity system works on the basis of splitting up different tasks between different people and different sections who are "dedicated" (or supposed to be!) to their particular jobs.

This is known as the division of responsibility or the division of labour.

ACTIVITY 10
Time guide
4 mins

Write down one advantage of splitting up tasks between different sections at work. Preferably think of your own workplace or, if you get stuck, think of another organisation such as a hospital.

* _____

* _____

You might have said something like this:

* It enables people to do things they are good at or are trained for

* It enables a complex job to be done in a reasonable amount of time.

If we take the example of the hospital it might be the job of one section to make sure there is oxygen available, another team has responsibility for performing the operation itself, another section in the hospital dispenses the medicine, and another team cooks for everyone.

Quite obviously you wouldn't want the doctors repairing the tannoy or hunting round town trying to buy dressings for the next patient and a mop head to clean the floor, when they could be getting on helping people to get better.

Alright, but what about some of the disadvantages of this division of labour?

ACTIVITY 11
Time guide
4 mins

Write down one disadvantage of splitting up tasks between different sections at work.

* _____

* _____

Well, I'm sure you've often come up against the problem of "the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing." It would be wrong for me to give just one example which might appear to put all the blame on one section so I'll give two counter-balanced examples:

* a willing sales department trying to sell more of your production and you didn't tell them you're about to take a machine out of service for maintenance

or

* the sales department taking orders for immediate despatch when they know it's going to mess up your production schedule and the customer would be just as happy with delivery next month.

You can also get the problem of each section thinking they're the only ones who contribute real work: "everyone else just creates work".

We can sum up the disadvanteges of splitting up tasks between different functions as:

* lack of liaison and understanding

* lack of communication

* delay

* development of uncooperative entrenched attitudes

So, let's see what can be done to make your job more manageable.

ACTIVITY 12
Time guide
6 mins

Write down two ways of improving mutual understanding between different sections at work. Perhaps you can think of your section or department and one you occasionally or frequently have misunderstandings with. I'll start the list with one example:-

* Meet their supervisor more often on a formal basis
* _____
* _____

There are all sorts of ways mutual understanding can be improved. Here are just four:

* Meet other supervisors on a formal basis to keep each informed of upcoming changes.
* See each other informally as well to exchange views and "gripes".
* Write an article for the staff magazine about the functions of your section or department, emphasising the need to be kept in the picture (or getting someone in your workteam to write it).
* Rotate or "cross-train" staff.

It's very useful that not just you, but also your workteam, get to understand about other sections. This is one reason why it can be very useful to recruit from within the organisation.

Similarly, any change made to a system as a whole will be felt in every sub-system.

ACTIVITY 13
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose your company secures a major order to export to China - it doesn't matter what goods or service you provide. Jot down five departments or sub-systems which would have to make special efforts to adapt.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Obviously what you respond will reflect the set-up in your own workplace, so your answer may differ from mine. However, I'd suggest the following though this isn't by any means all.

Purchasing - would have to ensure you had the materials.

Planning - would have to schedule time and materials.

Production - would have to produce and ship the goods.

Despatch - would have to pack goods for export to China.

Finance - might have to arrange financial backing.

Administration - would have to cope with the export documentation.

Depending on what you were supplying you might also have to send some of your staff on a crash course in Chinese language and culture so they could go to China and set the product up wherever it was to be used.

Not a single department in the whole workplace would be unaffected by it or would be able to say 'it was nothing to do with us'.

No part of your organisation works in isolation. What you do in your department has an effect on the work done in other departments. So we see a set of activities working together to achieve the objectives of the whole organisation. That is why we often refer to organisations as systems for getting work done.

Here are some examples of what I mean.

* Purchasing places a bulk order for stationery with a new supplier. The paper can be used for typing or, supposedly, in plain paper copies but, in practice, it doesn't suit your machines and tends to jam. Purchasing are pleased with their performance but in the office you are dissatisfied with the high scrap rate on the photocopier.

* Computer analysts at head office order a certain kind of personal computer for managers in the branches which didn't previously have them. The computers are the same as those used in head office. This is in line with the policy of having similar business machines throughout the company.

  The trouble is they're not compatible with the printers already in use and not supported by the software the managers really need so, as far as the branch offices are concerned, they've incurred considerable costs for no real benefit.

In both these examples, sub-systems have set out to do their own job well - to reduce costs and to put company policy into action - but because they have not considered the effect of what they're doing on other sub-systems they have worsened, rather than improved, the system's performance overall.

We mentioned in Part A the importance to survival of systems being able to adapt to change. This isn't simply a question of 'rising to the occasion' now and then. All systems continually change, adjust, right themselves and try to find some kind of balance and this balance needs to be tested out in every sub-system.

You think how gingerly you try yourself out when you first get out of bed after a bout of 'flu!

That checking of balance depends on a continual flow of information which can best be obtained by talking regularly with your own workteam and with supervisors in other sub-systems which relate to yours.

Remember in Part A we said that all systems receive information from a wider system, process or convert it, and supply information to another system. The same is true of sub-systems too. It's quite possible that your output is another sub-system's input and the better you understand each other's needs, the more efficient the system as a whole is likely to be.

Whatever the circumstances if you get a chance of improving your work relationship with other supervisors, it's likely to be a good investment.

3 Boundaries

Now let's look at boundaries.

Most people like to have a clear idea of what they're supposed to be doing at work and what they are responsible for. We tend to feel more confident and sure of ourselves if we have. But think about this for a minute or two longer.

ACTIVITY 14
Time guide
3 mins

Write down one way in which having clear boundaries between your area and other sections helps you to do your job as a supervisor better.

* _____

* _____

You may have said something like "I know who I can expect to do what; and who I can't" and perhaps "It makes it clear that I can tell my people what to do, and other people can't interfere on my patch."

But there are disadvantages to this very clear-cut situation.

ACTIVITY 15
Time guide
6 mins

Write down one disadvantage of dividing responsibilities between your area and other sections at work.

* _____

* _____

Sometimes the dividing line can be very arbitrary and perhaps it would make more sense if you completed certain tasks in particular circumstances: or - vice versa - sometimes you'd like some other section to take responsibility for certain marginal jobs.

There can also be the problem that some things can finish up outside your area and they don't seem to be anyone else's responsibility either.

If you have to hand over to the supervisor of the next shift you could write a book on some of its problems.

How can some of the effects of these difficulties be overcome?

ACTIVITY 16
Time guide
5 mins

Suppose you are a supervisor in a firm where responsibilities aren't at all clearly defined. Jobs get missed because nobody seems to be responsible for them and, on the other hand, you're constantly having to take care not to tread on other people's toes. You can only do so much on your own initiative before the difficulties have to be thrashed out between you, the other supervisor and your manager.

Jot down two ways in which you might sort out between you who was responsible for what and ensure that all the department's work was done.

* _____

* _____

Clearly you've got to go through what everybody does and work out how that fits in with other people's work and with what the department as a whole is trying to achieve.

To help you do this you might use:

* job descriptions	a careful written identification of everyone's job, the tasks they do and the responsibilities they carry.
* an organisation chart	a diagram which shows who is acccountable to whom and for what in the whole department.
* Management by objectives (MBO)	where you and your workteam and you and your boss establish what you will and what you won't be able to expect from each other. In this way any area not covered by you and your workteam might come to light and it could be clarified - further up the line if necessary - who is going to be responsible.

If you hesistated whether to mention job descriptions, I agree with you. They would help as long, of course, as they're drawn up carefully, and provided people respect them, and don't treat as just one more fad.

Similarly, organisation charts are only useful provided they have been drawn up carefully and are up-to-date.

ACTIVITY 17
Time guide
5 mins

You might find it useful at this stage to jot down any problems of 'no-man's-land' - areas of work which nobody seems to be responsible for - in your own workplace and any ideas you may have for doing something about them and improving working relations between your section and another in the next ten days or so.

* _____

* _____

You might have decided to have a chat with a fellow supervisor to clarify who's going to handle what in the event of some special situation arising. You might also want your boss and his or her boss to decide. You might want to bring the matter up at the next formal meeting and perhaps get some policy statement minuted. Better to try to improve the way the system operates now than to put it off until there's a crisis.

One way of putting it would be that you shouldn't spend all your time in the capital; you must also go to the frontier regions as often as you can!

4 Overlap

As well as situations where no-one seems to be responsible, I'm sure there are also many occasions when someone else's activities seem to encroach on your part of the system.

Again let's see if we can see some good points here as well as looking at the problems it can create.

ACTIVITY 18
Time guide
6 mins

Suppose some records which your section keeps are regularly checked by somebody from another section who needs the information they contain for work of their own. Are there any advantages in such a situation where there is some overlap between your area of work and another section's?

Jot down one possible advantage.

* _____

_____

You could well have said that some things are so important that it really doesn't matter that two different supervisors make themselves responsible for making sure everthing's in order.

For example, if you're responsible for buying something that is highly perishable, you probably won't object if another supervisor also checks whether it's fresh - better that today than being fined by a health inspector tomorrow!

Also, overlap does bring together people who otherwise might not liaise enough. Other potential problems might come up during the conversation, and be sorted out before they get worse.

But what are the disadvantages?

ACTIVITY 19
Time guide
6 mins

Write down two disadvantages of too much overlap of responsibilities between your area and other sections at work.

* _____

* _____

You might have used the word "waste" or "duplication". It can waste time, represent a duplication of effort, and can waste money.

If overlap represents a serious problem then it's clearly something you, your fellow supervisors and your manager need to sort out in the same way as you would if there were areas of work which appeared to be nobody's responsibility.

ACTIVITY 20
Time guide
2 mins

We suggested three things you could use to help you in these discussions. Jot down what they were.

* _____

* _____

* _____

The most important thing is finding time to get together and sort the problem out between you. To help you do this you could use:

Job descriptions
Organisation charts
Management by Objectives

Attitude comes into this as well. Perhaps you're half-resigned to people encroaching on what you see as your territory; but perhaps it's worth bearing in mind that, with human activity systems, it's not always easy to see where the boundary is between one sub-system and the next and perhaps a little duplication is better than some situations going without anyone covering them.

So, although, as we've seen, we can operate far more efficiently if we have a clear idea of what our responsibilities are and the boundaries within which we operate, the system also needs to be flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances.

And this isn't just a question of an individual supervisor being willing to bend - it needs a flexible and open-minded approach to each new set of circumstances from management as well.

SELF CHECK 2
Time guide
10 mins

Complete the following statement with a suitable word or group of words:

a It's worth clarifying any misunderstandings about where the boundary is because:-

_____

b Too much overlap is bad because it causes waste and duplication of:

time

_____

_____

c Not all duplication is bad because

_____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll have to check out your answers carefully. (a) You need to clarify in advance where the boundaries are between your responsibilities and those of another supervisor because you may not have time to discuss things when something urgent crops up. It's good to know where your responsibilities start and where you stand. (b) Too much overlap is obviously bad because it can cause duplication of effort, waste time and be very expensive, not to mention being very annoying and frustrating. However (c) not all duplication is necessarily bad because some things are better covered twice rather than not at all.

5 Summary

* Tasks need to be divided up between different sections and departments

* These sub-systems and their boundaries solve some problems and create others

* Anything which one sub-system does has an effect on other sub-systems and, although it may bring about an improvement in one sub system, it may worsen the situation in others unless the needs of the whole system are considered.

* Overlap of resonsibility also has disadvantages and advantages

* You can and should improve your position by:

  clarifying misunderstandings

  investing time liaising more often and more effectively to solve present problems and to discover potential problems and

  seek to reduce some (but not all) duplication of time, effort and expense.

PART C RESULTS FOR OTHERS

1 Introduction

So, now you can think of your position in terms of a human activity system. It's probably quite a complex organisation and it's important to understand the part you play in it. To help you do that, in this part of the unit we'll be looking at authority and responsibility, and in the next part we'll look at the various types of work relationship.

As a supervisor, you are a first-line manageer.

You're job will be unique in some ways and it probably also has some features in common with any other manager's job.

2 What is "management?"

We use the word "management" everyday but what does it mean?

ACTIVITY 21
Time guide
6 mins

Jot down four things which you think any manager has to do: e.g:

* Plan
* _____
* _____
* _____

You may well have included things like plan, organise, staff, lead, innovate, liaise, coordinate or control and communicate.

EXTENSION 3
page 58

A useful way to remember the range of things that any manager has to do comes from a writer by the name of Koontz. He suggests "POSLeC" as a handy way of remembering the following words:-

* Planning
* Organising (non-human resources)
* Staffing (organising human resources)
* Leading (motivating your workteam)
* Controlling (the four Ms: Machines, Materials, Money and Men and/or Women)
* Communicating

So, there are many definitions of management and yours and mine, like most people's definitions of management, are probably quite good but it's very difficult - perhaps impossible - to sum up such a vast and important subject in a few words but a familiar definition is "getting things done through others" or, perhaps better still:-

ACHIEVING RESULTS THROUGH OTHERS.

I guess most of us can accept that definition without difficulty. Let's explore it further in this part of this unit and the next and see how useful it is. Doing this will help us to see how demanding the work of a supervisor is, and why.

To achieve a better understanding of what "ACHIEVING RESULTS THROUGH OTHERS" means in practice we're going to have to tackle a whole series of questions.

First of all we need to understand better the idea of "ACHIEVING RESULTS". To do this we'll have to look at:-

* What sort of results are we talking about?

and

* Who wants these results achieved?

3 What sort of results?

First of all we each need to think out for ourselves what our own results are supposed to be since obviously this will vary from one person to another, but, as supervisors, we'll probably have the common factor of achieving these results through our workteams.

ACTIVITY 22
Time guide
5 mins

List some of the main results you have to achieve through your workteam.

* _____
* _____
* _____

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ACTIVITY 22
Time guide
5 mins

List some of the main results you have to achieve through your workteam.

* _____
* _____
* _____

Your list might include things like:

* getting output up
* meeting deadlines
* reducing downtime or overtime
* reducing scrap rates (or number of letters requiring re-typing)
* maintaining good customer relations

and so on.

4 **Who wants these results?**

We've said that being a supervisor is very demanding but who makes these demands?

ACTIVITY 23
Time guide
5 mins

Now look at your list of results and write down who wants them achieved.

* _____
* _____

One immediate answer could be that you the supervisor want these achieved but you'll still have put other names down as well including, no doubt, people like your boss, the board, customers, and so on. You could even have included that your workteam want them achieved.

SELF CHECK 3
Time guide
3 mins

Your part in the management of your organisation is (fill in the missing words):-

TO ACHIEVE RESULTS _____ OTHERS _____ OTHERS.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. It's your job to achieve results through others for others or to achieve results for others through others.

5 Why are you responsible?

Let's explore: why are you responsible?

ACTIVITY 24
Time guide
2 mins

Do you want these results achieved FOR YOUR BENEFIT? Yes or No?

_____

I think the answer could be "yes AND no!"

"Yes" because if you tell your workteam to do something obviously you want it done.

"No" because you in turn have a place in the system: you're not asking your workteams to do things entirely for your benefit or satisfaction, important though this may be to you. Many other people in the organisation are concerned.

So, when we talk about the supervisor's job we see that you're doing it because results are needed FOR others and not simply THROUGH others.

So, why are you responsible? An easy question to ask but difficult to answer: but let's try:-

ACTIVITY 25
Time guide
8 mins

Why are you responsible?

* _____

* _____

Well, perhaps

* because they offered me the job and I took it
* because that's what I get paid for
* because I like responsibility
* because no-one else is going to carry the can!

In the end we're probably lost for more reasons than "Well, somebody has to do it".

SOMEONE HAS TO BE RESPONSIBLE

We'll explore these ideas further in a moment but first let's look at the difference between the words "responsibility" and "responsibilities".

6 Responsibility and responsibilities

Let's see if we can throw a bit of light on when to use the word "responsibility" and when to use the word "responsibilities".

ACTIVITY 26
Time guide
3 mins

You have responsibility for the smooth running of work in your section.

Your responsibilities include motivating, machine performance, balancing accounts, collecting data, promoting customer contact or whatever.

Apart from the fact that one word is in the singular and the other is in the plural what is the difference between the words "responsiblity" and "responsibilities"?

* _____

* _____

What I'm trying to get at is that you CARRY something called "responsibility" and you CARRY OUT a number of major or minor "responsiblities".

The role of supervisor in the system is complicated for one thing because you not only have to carry responsibility for the results (or lack of them!) of others but also because you are often expected to carry out a wide range of responsibilities (some very complex, some very minor, but between them very time-consuming and very demanding).

6.1 Responsibilities

As a supervisor, achieving results through others and for others, you carry the main resonsibility for your section or department.

In other words, you are accountable to more senior management for the achievement of the results.

To do this there will be a whole range of specific responsibilities that you will have to carry out, or see that others carry out.

ACTIVITY 27
Time guide
10 mins

List some of the specific responsibilities you are expected to carry out as part of your job.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Of course you could list dozens of responsibilities, and each supervisor would produce a different list. Probably the most common ones are:-

* liaising with other departments
* allocating work
* maintaining the quality of the product or service
* coordinating with sub-contractors
* inducting and training new staff
* repairing or setting-up equipment
* chasing suppliers
* making safety checks
* ensuring that output targets are met
* dealing with the shop steward or staff representative
* putting in requests for new equipment
* handling day-to-day problems
* contributing to departmental plans

The supervisor should carry out some of these responsibilities personally. Other responsibilities, though often thought of as part of a supervisor's own job, are really ones that do not have a "supervisory" flavour: and some responsibilities might belong under either heading.

ACTIVITY 28
Time guide
3 mins

Try and divide the responsibilities I have listed (and any others of your own) into one or other of these three groups:-

(a) Essential for the supervisor to do

(b) A supervisor shouldn't really have to do

(c) Could be either (a) or (b)

I think you'll agree that some jobs are clearly supervisory, some are clearly non-supervisory, and some are very hard to fit under one heading or the other.

Here are my suggestions for you to agree or disagree with:-

a Essential for the supervisor to do:-

allocating work

ensuring that output targets are met

dealing with the shop steward or staff representative

putting in requests for new equipment

contributing to departmental plans

b A supervisor shouldn't really have to:-

maintain the quality of the products or services

repair or set-up equipment

make safety checks

Perhaps some or all of these jobs could be done by your workteam rather than by you personally.

c Could be either (a) or (b)

liaising with other departments

coordinating with sub-contractors

inducting and training new staff

chasing suppliers

handling day-to-day problems

Perhaps the answer is that on occasions these jobs could be done by your workteam, but where something is rather out of the ordinary they will need to refer to you or perhaps you will need to handle it yourself.

No wonder your job is demanding. It's not so much the individual responsibilities in themselves (although some of course can be pretty demanding!). What's most demanding is having to tackle a wide range of different responsibilities, and having to switch tracks usually at a moment's notice, and then to something else and something else again, often in the space of only a minute or two.

You may want to think about which of the responsibilities you carry out yourself are "shouldn't really have to myself" responsibilities. Whatever you do, you cannot avoid still carrying overall responsibility for them.

SELF CHECK 4
Time guide
10 mins

a Effective supervision can be described as

ACHIEVING _____

b Supervisory responsibilities can be divided into three groups:-

* jobs the supervisor should carry out personally

* _____

* _____

c The job of supervisor can be very demanding because

_____

_____

_____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. a Effective supervision can be described as achieving results through others for others. b Supervisory responsibilities can be divided into those the supervisor should carry out; those which do not really have a "supervisory flavour"; and those which may arguably come under either heading. c The job of a supervisor can be very demanding because it usually involves quite a wide range of specific responsibilities on top of your overall responsibility for achieving results through others for others.

In the next section we'll explore what we mean by these OTHER people who we achieve results FOR.

7 Authority .

When we were asking "why are you responsible?" we thought of answers such as:-

"because they offered me the job and I took it";

"because no-one else is going to carry the can";

"because someone has to be responsible".

Let's look at these answers a little more closely.

First, "because they offered me the job and I took it".

Whatever the reason, in order to carry out your responsibilities you must have the power to make some decisions, to ask people to do things, or to take certain courses of action.

By appointing you the "powers-that-be" have in turn given you some power.

ACTIVITY 29
Time guide
5 mins

What other words are there for your supervisory "power"?

You might have said something like authority, clout, control or influence. The word we're going to use in this unit is "authority".

In practice there are three different kinds of authority:

* conferred authority

* specialist authority

* personal authority

* Conferred Authority

This is the authority "bestowed" on you because of your supervisory position. It is the right to expect people to take instruction from you, or the right to make certain decisions. We call this CONFERRED AUTHORITY, and we talk about people who occupy "positions of authority".

* Specialist authority

There is the authority which comes from your specialist knowledge and experience. So we can talk about a person such as an "authority on his subject" or simply "Ok, Bill, we'll do that: you understand these things".

Some people's whole job is to look after a specialised activity wherever it arises in the workplace. Examples of this would be the Safety Officer. As far as any matters concerning his specialist field is concerned he has authority, but it doesn't extend any further than that. So, the Safety Officer can tell somebody to switch off a machine because it's unsafe but he can't tell him to do another job instead.

That would be the responsibility of the supervisor in that work area.

We'll look at this again in Part D when we examine relationships at work.

* Personal authority

Finally, your authority can come from your own personal qualitities - "he's a born leader".

ACTIVITY 30
Time guide
10 mins

Think of these three kinds of authority:-

Conferred authority
Specialist authority
Personal authority

Write them down in what you think is their order of importance in your job.

Then try putting a percentage figure to each one to suggest approximately how much you rely on each type of authority to do your job.

Most important: _____ authority ____%

_____ authority ____%

Least important: _____ authority ____%

There is obviously no single right answer. You might just like to note that whereas conferred authority is bestowed on you by someone else, specialist authority and personal authority belong to you and may have to be earned by you before they'll be recognised and accepted by those around you.

Let's concentrate for a moment on CONFERRED authority.

Conferred Authority is often emphasised by certain SYMBOLS such as stripes on the sleeve, or by ACTS such as public events like a coronation or by giving someone a company car.

ACTIVITY 31
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down two SYMBOLS which are used in your organisation to underline someone's CONFERRED AUTHORITY:-

_____ _____

_____ _____

Depending on where you work these symbols might include the more obvious ones such as stars on the epaulettes of a general, badges, and so on, or the somewhat subtler things such as a slightly better overall (perhaps white instead of brown).

A separate office might symbolise the authority to call meetings and see people privately.

Sometimes it's quite hard to separate symbols of authority from status symbols. For example, on the face of it a larger desk might be both a status symbol and a symbol of your increased authority. A larger desk may be a necessity but with some promotions there's no need for such a big desk; perhaps there's no need for a desk at all.

Now let's look at ACTS, those occasions when authority is actually conferred on people. They may not be big formal occasions like the coronation but things like "Right, as you know Alice's retiring and I'm making Betty supervisor starting now, so what Betty says goes".

ACTIVITY 32
Time guide
10 mins

How else might promotion be communicated?

* _____

* _____

* _____

Your answer might include a special minute or memorandum, notices on the notice-board and announcements in circulars or staff magazines.

So, by certain symbols and acts, we are made aware that someone has been given authority, i.e. has had authority conferred upon them.

Now let's look at our second reason for taking responsibility:

"because no-one else is going to carry the can".

This may sound negative but we need to face up to the fact that when things go wrong, you're responsible. Yes, even if it's not your fault! It's possible that you may not get any thanks when things go well but when things go wrong expect more than just a few words along the lines of "Of course it's your fault. It was someone in your section, wasn't it?"

ACTIVITY 33
Time guide
2 mins

If you were given increased responsibility, how much authority do you think you would want?

Tick whichever comes closest to your choice

* unlimited authority _____
* enough to get the job done _____
* as little as possible _____
* none _____

I'm hoping you'll agree that you need, and would therefore want, enough to get the job done. In other words, you need enough authority to be able to carry the responsibility placed on your shoulders.

ACTIVITY 34
Time guide
5 mins

Suppose you've been given increased responsiblity but you haven't really been given sufficient authority to carry it out to your satisfaction.

a What will be the drawbacks of the "mismatch?"

b What will you have to rely on to get the job done?

*

Different people will have different expectations of you. Your boss might expect you to get things carried out very quickly but other people might ask you what it's got to do with you and it could be very frustrating and time-comsuming to convince them to get on with it. So, you might wind up having to rely very heavily on your specialist authority (if you have any!) and very probably on personal authority The trouble with this, of course, is that you might find yourself asking favours all the time when really you're trying to achieve results for your boss not for your own benefit.

In other words, you'll have to rely on your own powers of persuasion, encouragement, coaxing - maybe even bullying!- to get the job done.

EXTENSION 4
page 58

If you want to find out more about authority you could also work through another unit in this series: "Supervising with Authority."

SELF CHECK 5
Time guide
4 mins

If you haven't enough conferred authority, your authority has to come from _____ _____ and _____ _____.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. If the job you're asked to do doesn't carry sufficient conferred authority you'll have to rely on:-your specialist authority: the authority you have because of the extent of your knowledge and expertise: and/or your personal authority: your personal standing with your workteam and other people you come into contact with at work. This can be the source of very considerable stress and strain at work. Whatever happens the responsiblity for doing the job you've undertaken to do remains with you and trying to do it without sufficient authority can be like trying to work with one or both hands tied behind your back. What's more, you can't do anything to shift the burden of responsiblity. You can delegate authority: give someone the authority to do a particular task on your behalf. You can't delegate responsibility: the responsibility for supervising results satisfactorily is on your shoulders.

So, if the responsibility placed on your shoulders is greater than the stripes on your arm (your conferred authority) you'll have to bring into play the other types of authority (your personal authority) and the authority you've got back because of your special knowledge.

And yet ...

ACTIVITY 35
Time guide
3 mins

If you ask a member of our workteam to do something and that person makes a mess of it who is responsible?

* _____

Not only that person, but also the person who asked that person to do it: namely _____.

That's right YOU. You can delegate authority but you can't escape responsibility.

SELF CHECK 6
Time guide
8 mins

a The authority that's bestowed on you because of your position is called _____ authority.

b The other two types of authority are known as _____ authority and _____.

c If you are given _____ you will also need to be given _____ authority to do the job.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. a The authority given to supervisors because of their positions is called conferred authority. b The other two types of authority are known as personal authority and that arising from your own specialist knowledge and experience i.e. specialist authority. c If you are given responsibility, you will need to be given enough authority to go with it.

Perhaps the last paragraph sounds rather severe and you may be tempted to think something like "it's not like that where I work: we all help each other out and share the work around: no-one makes a fuss about responsibility and authority where I work.

Agreed: when everything is going smoothly and to plan, it's possible for the lines of authority and responsibility not to need emphasis but they have to be there, especially and immediately if there's a change of direction or any kind of hitch.

Finally before we summarise this part of the unit, let's look at "someone has to be responsible."

Why do we need to have clear lines of authority and clear boundaries to our responsibility, with the supervisor's position clearly understood by all?

ACTIVITY 36
Time guide
5 mins

Write down two reasons why someone has to be the responsible person and given enough authority.

* _____

* _____

Your answer will obviously be in your own words but you may find them covered by my answer:-

perhaps the emphasis should be on the someONE.

If you are the head of the section, that person may be you.

The work itself will usually need it. Even if you're a group and you normally like to agree on things democraticallly, decisions arise when one person has to decide.

Then, there are external reasons. Pressures outside the group can sometimes almost force the group to have someone in charge whether or not they really wanted. Outsiders will want to speak to "the boss". They will want to see someone in charge, someone who is responsible and has authority.

Finally, there are internal reasons. People inside the organisation usually want some sort of structure in order to know where they stand and to avoid general chaos.

EXTENSION 5
page 58

I think one of the best answers comes from the Modular Programme for Supervisory Development:-

> External pressures on the group make it organise itself"
>
> Even when the allocation of areas of responsibility and the appointment of a leader are not regarded as essential by the members of the group ("We all pitch in and help, nobody is the boss") contact with the world outside the group forces some kind of structure upon it. For example government authorities or suppliers of goods and services to the group, and those who make use of the goods and services it produces, all ask for the person in charge or the signature of someone "in authority"." (Module I page 4).

I think you'll agree that it's fairly easy to accept and see why "outsiders" (people outside the boundary of your system) make you "shape up!"

And within the boundaries of your organisation there are reasons why your system needs some clear line. The "Modular Programme for Supervisory Develoment" continues as follows:-

"Internal pressures for organisation

In larger organisations it becomes essential for internal administrative reasons to formalise the free and easy "we all pitch in and help" arrangements. Without some degree of structure chaos would reign:

- jobs would be either left undone or duplicated
- conflict would develop
- communication would be haphazard
- employees would feel uneasy about the scope of their responsibility.
- team spirit would suffer, as no-one would visualise himself as an important part of a small primary group, but rather feel anonymous and unimportant, lost in a large assembly."

SELF CHECK 7
Time guide
2 mins

The pressures on groups to organise and to have a Chief or leader come from _____ and _____ sources.

There will be both internal and external pressures for someone to be in charge and thus for the group to organise itself accordingly.

Even when you can agree everything by a majority vote pressures outside the group can sometimes almost force the group to have someone in charge whether or not they really want to have a head or spokesperson. "Take me to your _____."

Even if we don't think we need a leader, outsiders keep asking to speak to him or her. People outside your organisation want someone as their point of contact. They want to speak to someone in charge, someone who is responsible, someone who has some authority.

And if you have the authority without people knowing about it it's virtually no better than not having authority at all. As a first-line manager, you have to plan, organise, and control equipment, materials and money and achieve results through others. So, encourage people to recognise that being a supervisor is managerial work.

8 Summary

* Management = achieving results through others

  This includes:- Responsibilities you must carry out personally and:

  tasks you can delegate to your workteam

* You can delegate authority: you can't delegate overall responsibility

* Authority can be: Conferred authority
  Specialist authority
  Personal authority

* Responsibility without sufficient authority can create delays and frustration.

* Pressure for clear authority comes from :

  The nature of the work
  internal factors
  external factors

PART D RESULTS THROUGH OTHERS

1 Introduction

We now turn our attention to the people THROUGH whom you achieve results.

ACTIVITY 37
Time guide
8 mins

Make a list of the people through whom you achieve results at work.

* _____

* _____

_____

The immediate answer might be "through my own staff", "my workteam", "my subordinates", or similar wording.

I hope you also thought of your colleagues in other sections or departments and also perhaps customers and your contacts with suppliers. Remember that they will usually have to get their own results through you as well.

The people you achieve results through will fall broadly into these main catagories:-

those you CAN give orders to (plus those who shouldn't give orders to you).

those you CAN'T give orders to (plus those who shouldn't give orders to you).

2 Who can I tell to do things?

Just as your boss has a right to tell you what he wants from you, you too have a right to tell your workteam what results you want from them and, if necessary, how you expect them to achieve these results.

This sort of relationship, straight up and down the "chain of command" in an organisation is often given the label

"LINE relationship"

In this case you can tell your workteam what to do because you are in direct line of authority.

The good thing about line relationships is that you know very clearly where you stand, and so do the people who have a line relationship with you. But line relationships are not without their drawbacks.

ACTIVITY 38
Time guide
6 mins

List a couple of drawbacks of having to operate by means of line relationships.

* _____

* _____

Operating through line relationships - "observing the proper channels" - can be difficult. If you have to do so through your boss who then has to speak to someone else, who has to speak to someone across there who then speaks to his or her workteams, the usual three elements creep in:

Time
Money
Effort

There can be delays (some intolerable). Money spent or income lost, and a lot more effort and possibly frustration.

On balance, though in many cases - especially if there's no immediate hurry - line relationships do have the advantage of letting everyone know where they stand.

ACTIVITY 39
Time guide
8 mins

Who else tries to tell your workteam or you what to do,or what not to do?

* _____

* _____

* _____

In many ways it would be much simpler if no-one apart from you tried to tell your workteam what to do but as you've probably put in your answer, several people (including perhaps your boss) try to tell your workteam what or what not to do. They may include inspectors, safety officers, accounts and O and M staff, production or maintenance staff.

In the case of your boss telling your workteam quite often there are good reasons for this "short circuiting" of your authority and it's useful to have a good understanding with your boss so you can't get your wires crossed too often.

Some of the people you have listed may infact have a legitimate right to tell people under you what to do (or to tell you that they must do it).

ACTIVITY 40
Time guide
8 mins

Try writing down three things:-

a the name of someone in your organisation other than you who has a right to tell the people directly under your command what to do:

* _____

b any limit or conditions to how or how much they can "interfere": and

* _____

c whether you or your staff have a similar right in anyone else's department.

* _____

This can be a difficult question to answer without hesitation: you'd probably like to question anyone's right to tell your people what to do, but in practice there are some situations where you're prepared to accept "intereference".

For example, if the safety officer occasionally tells your people what to do (or what not to do) it can be annoying but generally you will accept the safety officer's right to "interfere".

People like this have a special FUNCTION to perform. This special type of relationship where someone at work is authorised to tell a member of your workteam what to do or how to do things is know as a

"FUNCTIONAL relationship".

So, we now have two types of relationship where someone can tell your workteam what to do.

ACTIVITY 41
Time guide
6 mins

Write down one advantage of functional relationships.

* _____

I can think of two which may overlap with your thoughts:-

* Critical specialised tasks - some "life and death" areas - can have someone's full-time care and attention;

* The supervisor is relieved of having to keep up-to-date in absolutely every specific area of knowledge, skill and expertise.

But it's not uncommon for relationships with functional departments to become strained and to see what they're trying, or indeed, have to do, as interference.

ACTIVITY 42
Time guide
6 mins

Jot down one disadvantage of functional relationships.

* _____

Probably one of the worst disadvantages of the functional relationship is a tendency not to cooperate enough, so some functional specialists might descend on you "to help you" when you don't have the time but it does suit them (for example, perhaps they can only lay on something in the height of your busy season) or the other way round when it would be OK by your schedule, they're devoting their energies in a different direction.

But again, on balance, there are advantages to having some experts in specialist areas and it must be worthwhile investing a bit of time in advance to liaise and understand each other's situation more. A bit of advance warning can work wonders (or, at least, lessen the crises!).

SELF CHECK 8
Time guide
4 mins

There are two types of relationship where someone can tell your workteam what to do. What are the names or labels often given to these two types of relationship?

_____ relationships and _____ relationships

There are two types of relationship where someone can tell your workteam what to do: LINE relationships and FUNCTIONAL relationships.

Let's reinforce this:-

Generally, just as your boss has a right to tell you what he or she wants from you, you too have a right to tell your workteam what results you want from them and, if necessary, how you expect them to achieve these results.

This sort of relationship, straight up and down the "chain of command" in an organisation is often known as a

"LINE relationship"

In this case you can tell your workteam what to do because you are in direct line of authority.

In your organisation some people perform special functions. Their relationship at work with members of your workteam is known as a

"FUNCTIONAL relationship"

Think back to what we were saying about systems as "a set of connected things or parts that form a whole or work together" and about how most systems are part of wider systems. Your section or department, which is a sub-system and the line and functional sections or departments around it illustrate how complex a human activity system can be in practice.

This is just as much the case with the other two main types of formal work relationships at work which we'll now move on to.

3 Who can't I tell to do things?

You can't TELL people with whom you have a LATERAL relationship or people with whom you have a STAFF relationship (and they shoudln't think they can tell yu what to do either!)

LATERAL relationships are those work relationships with colleagues who are "sideways" to you in other sections or departments. In other words, they are on the same level as you in the organisation.

ACTIVITY 43
Time guide
8 mins

List two or three colleagues with whom you have a LATERAL work relationship, and say what are your links with them.

* _____
* _____
* _____

From your list you will see that these colleagues' sections may be fairly separate from yours, like different departments in a large store, or very closely linked like machine shops and assembly.

If you are approximately level in the hierarchy your relationship is internal: you can't tell people with whom you have a lateral relationship what they should be doing; you don't have authority over each other, you'll have to liaise or coordinate, persuade or cajole (or, if things come to a head, go through your boss).

It may take a bit longer to persuade than to tell someone what to do but generally the good thing about lateral relationships is that if you're both reasonable people there's no standing on dignity and rank doesn't get in the way.

There is one more work relationship we need to know about. Some departments or individuals in an organisation will be there to help and advise you. It may well be that you are required to consult them, but they can't (or at least shouldn't) tell you or your staff what to do.

ACTIVITY 44
Time guide
8 mins

Name at least one other person in your organisation who has such a relationship with you and what help or advice you can get from him or her.

* _____

_____

Your answer will depend very much on the type of organisation you work for but could include the payroll clerk, the personnel officer or personnel manager, and perhaps someone in the purchasing department might give you advice and assistance on selecting machinery but perhaps you or your boss might be the one who has the final say.

Another example of a staff relationship is when your organisation has a training officer and you ask this "staff officer" to prepare a list for you of your workteam's training needs.

These relationships, where advice but not orders can be given, are STAFF relationships. The word "staff" in this connection comes from "staff officer" in the army, not because the person might work in a "staff" department.

Perhaps there are in turn people in your organsiation who can call on you to give them advice in this way (people you have a staff relationship with).

I don't know, of course, but to give two examples:-

* you might be in the packaging section and the people in marketing might turn to you for advice on a regular basis

OR

* you might be in premises department and a branch manager might want some ideas on how to decorate the shop front because the Queen's coming next month to the Town Hall across the street.

In practice, of course, there are often no hard and fast lines between functional relationships, where there is a right to give orders, and staff relationships, where no such right exist. So there are occasions when it is difficult or impossible to give a particular work relationship just ONE label or name.

The maintenance engineer, for example, might have authority to shut down a machine because it's about to blow up. In this case the relationship is functional. When you ask him for advice on less urgent matters, however, the relationship could be a staff one, as on these matters, he can't tell you what you must do.

Then again, a personnel officer might have developed great skill in interviewing potential new employees, and you come to trust his judgement. Before you know where you are, you find youself always accepting what he suggests on this and similar matters. Unless you're careful, what should be a staff relationship becomes in practice a functional one.

So, some "staffers" can become too dominant; procedures can become over-standardised or routinised, become cumbersome and cause delay. But they do have the advantage - if they are truly staff relationships and not distorted - of taking some of the donkey-work off the shoulders of the already heavily-burdened line supervisor, and of taking care of some of the tasks which crop up occasionally, which would be too time-consuming for the line supervisor.

SELF CHECK 9
Time guide
5 mins

1 There are two types of relationship where you can tell people what to do and even how to do it. They are called:-

_____ relationships and _____ relationships.

2 There are two types of relationship where you are not supposed to tell people what they must do. They are called:-

_____ relationships and _____ relationships.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. 1 There are 2 types of relationships where you can tell people what to do (and even how to do it). The names given to them are LINE relationships and FUNCTIONAL relationships. 2 There are 2 types of relationship where you do not have the authority to tell people what to do. The names given to them are LATERAL relationships and STAFF relationships.

5 Summary

Work relationships involving the supervisor fall into four types.

The first two involve authority ie the right to tell people what to do and even how to do it. They are:-

a LINE RELATIONSHIPS which are straight down the line or "chain of command". Just as your boss has authority over you, you have authority over your section.

b FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS which involve having the authority to tell people who are not normally part of one's workteam what to do.

The last two types of work relationships do not carry any (conferred) authority allowing you to tell other people what they must so. They are:-

c LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS which involve liaising with people in other sections, and with suppliers, and customers. The call for tact and persuasion and lots of skills other than just "telling" people.

d STAFF RELATIONSHIPS which are with specialists in your organisation who you can call on for advice. Perhaps you also are required to give advice to people you don't have authority over. Again, these relationships as they don't involve conferred authority, often require skills other than just "telling" people what to do.

PART E PERFORMANCE CHECKS

1 End Check

Time guide 60 mins

You may review your understanding of this unit as a whole by completing this group of questions. DON'T GUESS THE ANSWERS - if you're not sure, flick back into the unit and check before responding.

If you are still unsure then put a question mark against your response before proceeding.

TRUE/FALSE

Respond to each statement be writing TRUE or FALSE in the space provided.

1 One reason the role of supervisors is demanding is because you are often expected to carry out a wide range of specific responsiblities. _____

2 The responsibilities that supervisors have to carry out can be easily divided into supervisory tasks and "doing jobs". _____

3 Having to "switch tracks" mentally again and again is another reason why supervising is very demanding. _____

4 The only authority you can have over people at work is conferred on you by the system. _____

5 If you're given responsibility you'll need a commensurate amount of authority. _____

6 All the pressures for the appointment of someone in charge come from within the organisation. _____

7 Supervisors can achieve results through people who aren't in their section. _____

8 The work relationship between you and your workteam is known as a "staff relationship". _____

COMPLETION

Respond by completing with a suitable word or words.

9 A system is "a set of _____ things or parts that form a whole or work _____ ."

10 Systems can be classified into three types: designed systems, natural systems and _____ systems.

11 A useful definition of management is _____

_____

12 "POSLeC" stands for planning _____ ing, _____ ing, _____ ing and _____ ing.

13 As well as carrying overall _____ for achieving results though others a supervisor usually has to carry out a wide range of specific _____.

14 Authority bestowed on you can be referred to as _____ authority.

15 The giving of this type of authority can be underlined by the use of certain _____ and _____.

16 The work relationship between a supervisor and his or her workteam is known as a _____ relationship.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Respond to each question by putting a mark against the ONE answer which is most correct.

17 If you're given responsibility, which ONE of the following statements would you consider most sensible?

a you don't need authority as well

b a little authority goes a long way

c you must demand unlimited authority

d you need a commensurate amount of authority.

18 Which ONE of the following statements would you agree with most?

a you can give a member of your workteam some authority but no responsibility

b you can't delegate authority

c you can give members of your workteam responsibility without giving them authority

d you can give a member of your workteam some of your authority but you can't escape overall responsibility for the consequences.

19 Which ONE of the following statements would you agree with most?

a all the authority you need is the authority that's given you by the "powers-that-be"

b You don't need the authority that's given you by the "powers-that-be"

c if you behave responsibly people will obey you

d as well as the organisation conferring authority on you it is also useful to build up the authority flowing from your knowledge and personal qualities.

20 Which ONE of the following do you consider most comprehensive?

a the reason work groups have supervisors is because supervisors are ambitious

b the reason work groups have supervisors is because they do the jobs that no-one else is prepared to do.

c the reason work groups have supervisors is because of internal and external pressures.

d The reason work groups have supervisors is because giving people titles is a good way of getting more work out of them.

21 If someone is being promoted to the position of supervisor, which ONE of the following statements do you think most correct?

a It's better if management doesn't tell other people formally because it can lead to trouble

b There's no need for management to tell other people because it's nothing to do with anyone else

c There's no need for management to say anything because people will find out soon enough

d Certain symbols and acts can help to underline the authority of the supevisor.

22 If an internal auditor or inspector gives an order to a member of your workteam, which ONE of the following experssions would best describe the work relationship between them?

a a staff relationship

b a line relationship

c a functional relationship

d a lateral relationship.

23 When you liaise with a fellow supervisor, which ONE of the following expressions would best describe the work relationship between you?

a a staff relationship

b a line relationship

c a functional relationship

d a lateral relationship

24 Which ONE of the following do you agree with most?

a No-one should tell your workteam what to do

b No-one except you should be allowed to tell your workteam what to do

c Only you and your boss should be allowed to tell your workteam what to do

d It is sound managerial practice to clarify from the start who is and who is not allowed to tell your workteam what to do.

END CHECK - Checkout

Audio tape
Side 2
Time guide
30 mins

The answers and explanations for these End Checks are on Side 2 of our Audio Tape. Have your responses with you as you play this tape. As you listen you can check out how well you have done and make notes as you proceed.

2 Tutor Check

Time guide 60 mins

Read through this case incident: then deal with the accompanying questions.

S.V. (overheard in a pub):-

"That's the second time that's happened this week, by-passing me, going straight to the manager; and I don't know how many times it's happened since I was made up to suprvisor."

"It's unbelievable; I've been in charge of the section for four months now. No-one seems to know I'm in charge, or supposed to be!"

"And the Manager short-circuits me all the time. He's always giving work direct to my section. Well, I say 'always' sometimes he does and sometimes he remembers to pass work through me. He's so inconsistent."

"Do you realise not even my mates in the section know? Most of the first shift went by before they realised - when I ticked them off, stopping early for dinner."

"Most of the customers still don't know. Half the time when I talk to then they say they want to speak to someone in charge."

"Today was the limit. That fire drill! I had a flaming row with Francis. Why didn't he tell me in advance? Half an hour earlier would have made all the difference, or the night before. You know what it's like; the time it takes to set up things in the morning. What a waste of time. I'm all for fire drills. You know that; if only he'd told me last night. The man-hours I've lost because we didn't do it first thing."

"Of course the next thing is the Manager will carpet me because of the overtime we're going to have to pay. No-one in my section wants to do overtime at the moment. The Manager treats me as if I'm out to get more money for my mates, and they treat me like a turncoat."

"Excuse my laughter" said S.V.'s friend "a flaming row over a fire drill. I love it!"

"Well, at least I'm getting paid as a supervisor" said S.V. "Now, that is. Even personnel didn't know. My money wasn't right for weeks."

You need only write ONE or TWO sentences against each question.

1 Who were not as helpful to S.V. as they could have been? Alongside each name jot down your reasons.

2 In what ways was there something wrong with the system of responsibility and authority?

3 If you were appointed manager over S.V. what steps would you take to ensure that authority and responsibility in the section were clearly understood?

4 In what ways could S.V. have been more helpful to him/herself?

Send to Tutor

Now get your answers to your study tutor either by post or handing it over personally. You will receive your tutor's assessment and comment back through the post as soon as can be managed.

3 Work-based project

Time guide 60 mins

1 During the next one to five days, during or at the end of each day, make notes on the following:-

a when other people give work or instructions direct to your workteam, and roughly how often:

b when other people give instructions to you, and roughly how often:

c when other people give you advice (when you ask for it and when you don't) and roughly how often:

d when you give instructions to colleagues or their workteam:

e when you give advice (whether they request it or not) to colleagues or their workteam;

f when you liaise laterally with colleagues inside your organisation;

g when you liaise with people outside you organisation.

2 In the light of what we have discusssed about line, functional, staff and lateral relationships, list the two things which are best and the two things which are the worst about these relationships in practice.

Send to Tutor

Now get your answers to your study tutor either by post or handing it over personally. You will receive your tutor's assessment and comment back through the post as soon as can be managed.

PART F UNIT REVIEW

1 Return to Objectives

Having completed your work on this Unit, let's review how you feel about each of the four opening objectives. I'll repeat them here and add comments.

You will be better able to:

* UNDERSTAND YOUR ORGANSIATION AS A SYSTEM

We have seen some of the parallels between designed, natural and human activity systems such as your own organisation, understanding how sub-systems become parts of wider systems and the boundaries and overlapping that exist between them may help you understand how your own workteam's contribution fits in and how some of the conflicts at work come about and can be resolved.

Now to our second objective. You will be better able to:

* UNDERSTAND HOW AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY WORK AT YOUR WORKPLACE

We saw that you have authority conferred on you because the "powers-that-be" want you to achieve results for them through others and they can help you and, in turn, help themselves by underlining your authority by a variety of acts and symbols. Also, you can and should add to your authority by developing your personal qualities and knowledge.

Now to our third objective. You will be better able to:

* IDENTIFY THE TYPES OF WORK RELATIONSHIPS YOU CAN BE INVOLVED IN

We were able to group the many work relationships into four types; two (line and functional) involving authority and two (lateral and staff) not based on authority; and we discussed ways of improving these relationships which you can apply in your own workplace.

Now to our final objective. You will be better able to:

* APPRECIATE YOUR POSITION IN THE SYSTEM

We saw just how demanding your position is and why; your position as supervisor is not just part of a simple chain of command but also at the centre of a complex web of work relationships. No wonder it's challenging!

I trust that this work you have done was enjoyable and useful enough to encourage you to continue in your studies.

2 Extensions

I recommend that you take up as many of these extensions as you can. They will further increase your understanding and interest. You will also be able to check out a number of the ideas mentioned in the Unit. The extra time and effort will prove very worthwhile.

EXTENSION 1

Book: Systems Thinking, Systems Practice

Author: Peter Checkland

Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Chichester

An exhaustive and exhausting book. You may just want to skim or skip through it. I would certainly recommend a look at the Glossary of Terms at the back.

EXTENSION 2

Book: The Choice Series: 15: Leading Change

Author: Y Carlisle

Publisher: Northern Regional Management Centre, Washington

EXTENSION 3

Book: Essentials of Management

Author: Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York (& London)

To quote from the book's preface: "this book is a concise version of our 'Management: A Systems and Contingency Analysis of Managerial Functions, whose many editions and translations under the title of 'Principles of Management' have been so well accepted by readers over the years. Responding to demand for a much shorter book dealing only with the essentials of management, the authors have written this version of the parent text."

EXTENSION 4

If you want to find out more about authority, you could also work through the following Choice Unit:-

Book: The Choice Series: 18: Supervising with Authority

Author: Henry Mclaughlin

Publisher: Northern Regional Management Centre, Washington

EXTENSION 5

Book: Modular Programmes for Supervisory Management

Author: Prokopenko, J and White, J (Eds)

Publisher: International Labour Organisation (LTD). Geneva, 1081

A manual rather than a book. Excellent material, the five volumes turn into about 3,500 words in all, so there's plenty of useful material in it both for you to further your own development and if and when you want to devise interesting ways of doing something about your workteam's development.

The actual part which deals with the place of the supervisor in the organisation is Volume 1, Module M-I-01.

These extension opportunities can all be taken up via your Support Centre.

They will either have the materials or will arrange that you have access to the materials. However it may be more convenient to check out the materials with your Personnel or Training people at work - they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people, for example they will become aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.

3 References

REFERENCE 1	Book:	Oxford Paperback Dictionary
	Publisher:	Oxford University Press (OUP)
REFERENCE 2	Book:	Systems Thinking, Systems Practice
	Author:	Peter Checkland
	Publisher:	John Wiley and Sons, Chichester 1981
REFERENCE 3	Book:	Essentials of Management
	Authors:	Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell
	Publisher:	McGraw-Hill Book Company
REFERENCE 4	Book:	Modular Programme for Supervisory Management Volume 1, Module M-I-01 Page 4
	Authors:	Prokopenko, J and White, J (EDS)
	Publisher:	International Labour Organisation (ILO) Geneva 1981

These references can all be taken up via your Support Centre. They will either have the materials or will arrange that you have access to the materials. However check with your Personnel or Training people at work - they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people, for example they will become more aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.

If you do wish to make use of these references then don't think that you must read them right through. Just dip into them for a slighly wider treatment of the topic raised by the unit.

I should warn that the language and style of the writing is often difficult to cope with. So don't struggle with it too much. Do what I do when in difficulty, put the book back on the shelf and find a better one!

THE CHOICE SERIES

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF SUPERVISION

11 Needs and Rewards
12 Enriching Work
13 Workteams
14 Team Leading
15 Leading Change
16 Organisation Systems
17 Supervising in the System
18 Supervising with Authority
19 Workplace Control
20 Taking Decisions

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF SUPERVISION

30 Looking at Figures
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34 Easy Statistics
35 Quality Control
37 Controlling Output
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85 Industrial Relations in Action
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87 Hiring People
88 Supervising and the Law